



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE DEPORTS TWO FUGITIVE ALIENS TO BULGARIA

Absconders were found illegally possessing firearms

CHICAGO – Two Bulgarian fugitives, who were arrested last month in their Whiting, Ind., residence, were deported Friday by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Lazar Spassov, 54, and his wife Tania Spassova, 50, both illegal aliens, were arrested Feb. 9 at their Myrtle St. residence just across the Chicago border as a result of an enforcement operation targeting alien absconders. During the arrest ICE officers also seized a rifle and shotgun from the residence. The Spassovs remained in federal custody until they were deported to Sofia, Bulgaria.

The Spassovs illegally crossed the border from Mexico in 1993 and were apprehended by U.S. Border Patrol agents. In Sept. 1995 a federal immigration judge denied their asylum claim and ordered the Spassovs removed from the United States. An immigration judge later denied the Spassovs' appeal.

In September 2003 the Spassovs were ordered to present themselves to the ICE Chicago office for removal. They defied the order and remained in the U.S. as fugitives, thereby becoming targets for ICE's National Fugitive Operation Program (NFOP).

During the 2004 fiscal year, ICE fugitive alien apprehensions increased by 112 percent nationwide, resulting in 11,063 arrests. ICE's Chicago office arrested 572 fugitive aliens last year, spanning an area of responsibility that includes Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri and Wisconsin. Also last year, ICE deported a record-setting 160,000 aliens; 53 percent were criminal aliens.

"These are illegal aliens who not only defied the government's deportation order, but also broke the law by illegally possessing firearms," said ICE Field Office Director Deborah Achim. Achim oversees the ICE Chicago Detention and Removal Operations program. "We will continue to identify, arrest and remove fugitives who blatantly disregard our laws and the orders of our federal immigration judges."

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.